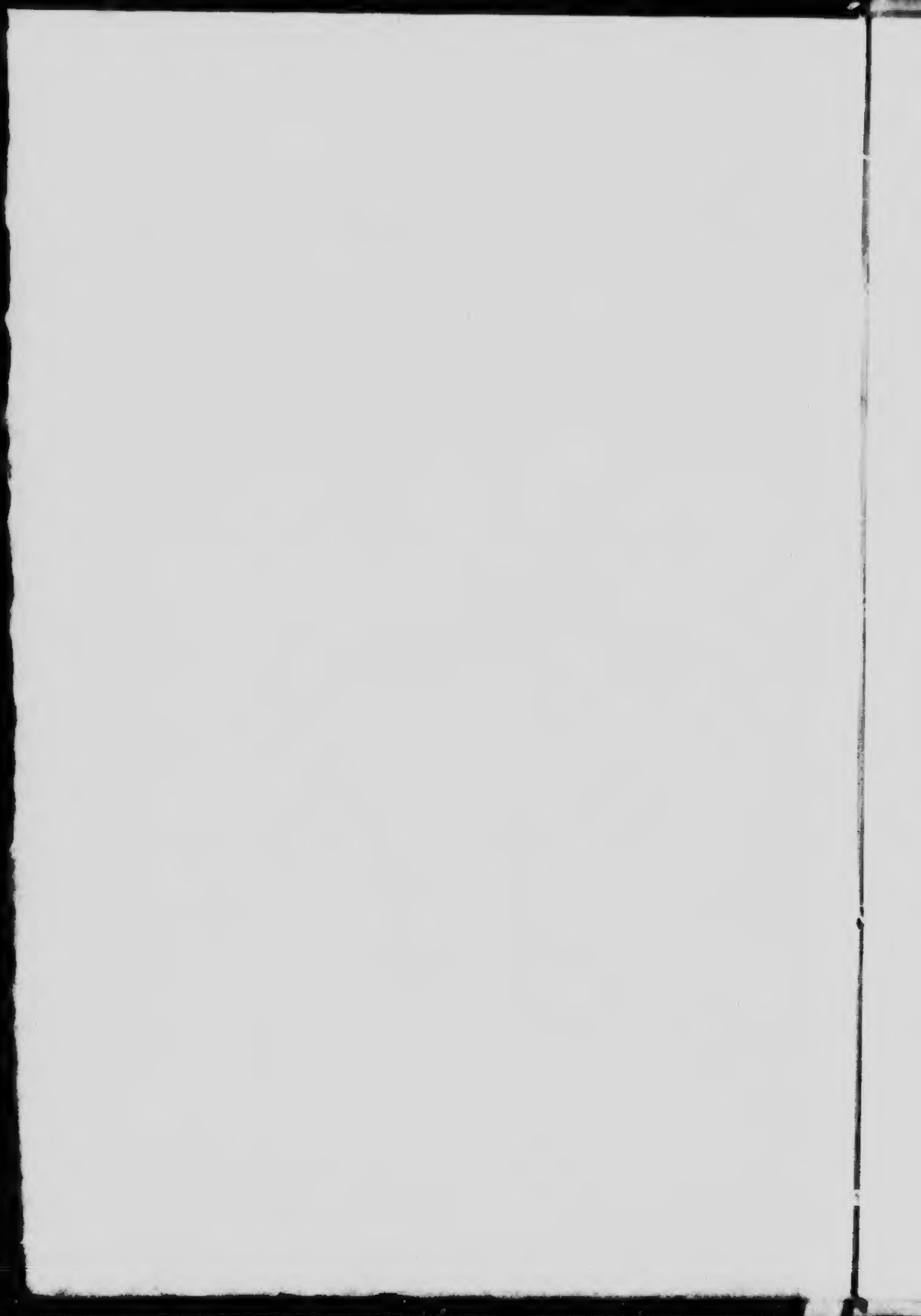
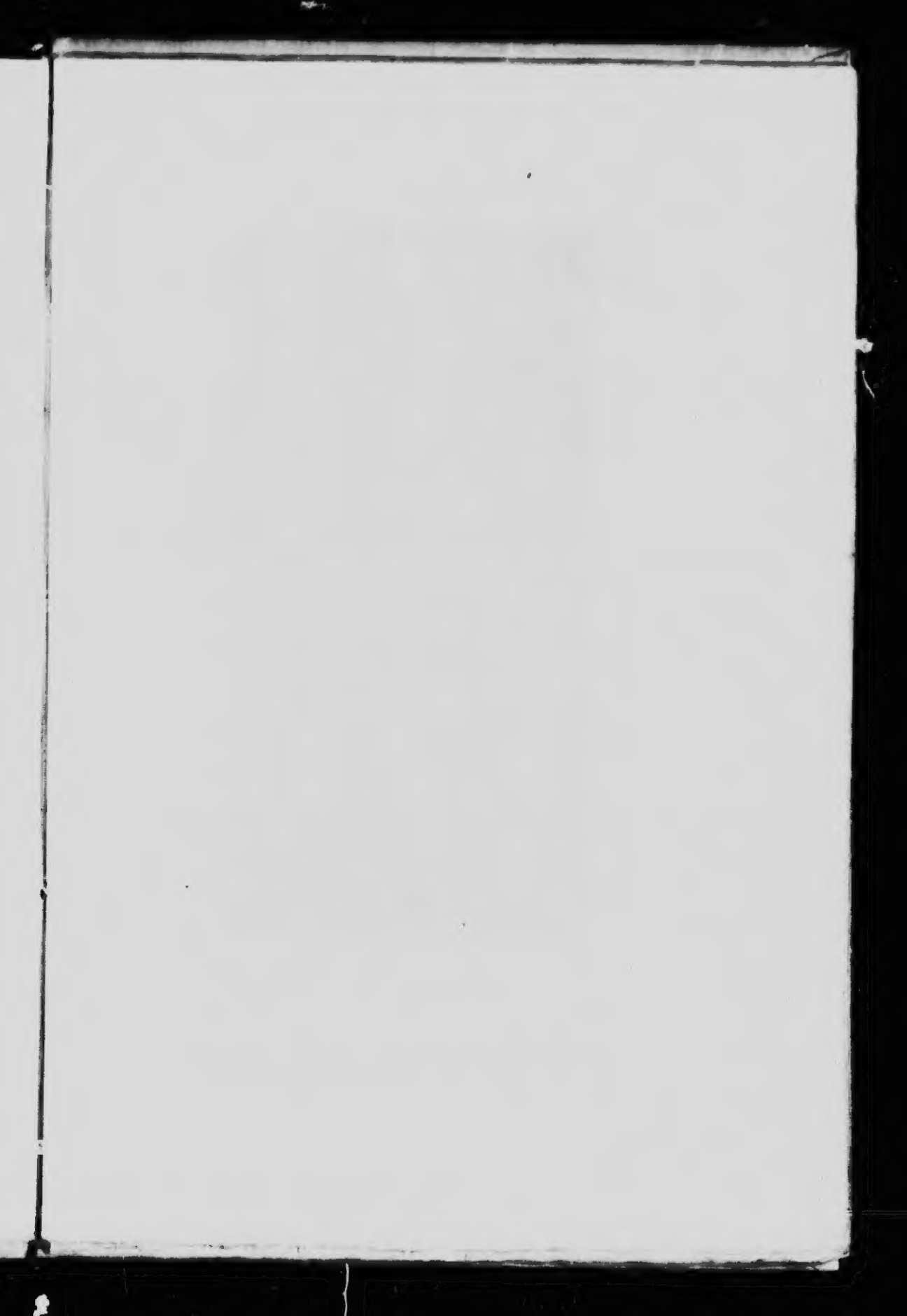


Christmas Eve
at S. Kavin's

What stars in Swamp and Sedge
When April winds prevail
And all the dwellers of the fens
awake?

Beissfarnan







Christmas Eve at S. Kavin's

By Bliss Carman

New York
Ingalls Kimball
M C M I



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Christmas Eve at S. Kavin's.

To the assembled folk
At Great S. Kavin's spoke
Young Brother Amiel on Christmas eve ;
I give you joy, my friends,
That as the round year ends,
We meet once more for gladness by God's leave.

On other festal days
For penitence or praise
Or prayer we meet, or fulness of thanksgiving ;
To-night we calendar
The rising of that star
Which lit the old world with new joy of living.

Ah, we disparage still
The Tidings of Good Will,
Discrediting Love's gospel now as then !
And with the verbal creed
That God is love indeed,
Who dares make Love his god before all men ?

Shall we not therefore, friends,
Resolve to make amends
To that glad inspiration of the heart ;
To grudge not, to cast out
Selfishness, malice, doubt,
Anger and fear ; and for the better part,

To love so much, so well,
The spirit cannot tell
The range and sweep of her own boundary !
There is no period
Between the soul and God :
Love is the tide, God the eternal sea.

Of old, men walked by fear ;
And if their God seemed near,
It was the Avenger unto whom they bowed,—
A wraith of their own woes,
Vain, cruel, and morose,
With anger and vindictiveness endowed.

Of old, men walked by hate ;
The ruthless were the great ;
Their crumbling kingdoms stayed by might alone.
Men saw vast empires die,
Nor guessed the reason why,—
The simple law of life as yet unknown

As love. Then came our Lord,
Proclaiming the accord
Of soul and nature in love's rule and sway,
The lantern that he set
To light us, shining yet
Along the Perfect Path wherein we stray.

To-day we walk by love;
To strive is not enough,
Save against greed and ignorance and might.
We apprehend peace comes
Not with the roll of drums,
But in the still processions of the night.

And we perceive, not awe
But love is the great law
That binds the world together safe and whole.
The splendid planets run
Their courses in the sun;
Love is the gravitation of the soul.

In the profound unknown,
Illumined, fair, and lone,
Each star is set to shimmer in its place.
In the profound divine
Each soul is set to shine,
And its unique appointed orbit trace.

There is no near nor far,
Where glorious Algebar
Swings round his mighty circuit through the night,
Yet where without a sound
The winged seed comes to ground,
And the red leaf seems hardl; to alight.

One force, one lore, one need
For satellite and seed,
In the serene benignity for all.
Letting her time-glass run
With star-dust, sun by sun,
In Nature's thought there is no great nor small.

There is no far nor near
Within the spirit's sphere.
The summer sunset's scarlet-yellow wings
Are tinged with the same dye
That paints the tulip's ply.
And what is colour but the soul of things?

(The earth was without form;
God moulded it with storm,
Ice, flood, and tempest; then when all was through,
Lest it should come to ill
For lack of loving still,
He gave it colour, living tint and hue.)

My joy of yesterday
Is just as far away
As the first rapture of my man's estate.
A lifetime or an hour
Has all there is of power.
In Nature's love there is no small nor great.

Of old, men said, "Sin not;
By every line and jot
Ye shall abide; man's heart is false and vile."
Christ said, "By love alone
In man's heart is God known;
Obey the word no falsehood can defile."

The wise physician there
Of our distress had care,
And laid his finger on the pulse of time.
And there to eyes unsealed
Earth's secret lay revealed,
The truth that knows not any age nor clime.

The heart of the ancient wood
Was a grim solitude,
The sanction of a worship no less grim;
Man's ignorance and fear
Peopled the natural year
With forces evil and malign to him.

He saw the wild rough way
Of cosmic powers at play ;
He did not see the love that lay below.
Jehovah, Mars, and Thor,
These were the gods of war
He made in his own likeness long ago.

Then came the Word, and said,
"See how the world is made,—
With how much loving kindness, ceaseless care.
Nor Wrath, but Love, call then
The Lord of beasts and men,
Whose hand sustains the sparrows in the air."

And since that day we prove
Only how great is love,
Nor to this hour its greatness half believe.
For to what other power
Will life give equal dower,
Or chaos grant one moment of reprieve !

Look down the ages' line,
Where slowly the divine
Evinces energy, puts forth control ;
See mighty love alone
Transmuting stock and stone,
Infusing being, helping sense and soul.

And what is energy,
In-working, which bids be
The starry pageant and the life of earth?
What is the genesis
Of every joy and bliss,
Each action dared, each beauty brought to birth?

What hangs the sun on high?
What swells the growing rye?
What bids the loons cry on the Northern lake?
What stirs in swamp and swale,
When April winds prevail,
And all the dwellers of the ground awake?

What lurks in the dry seed,
But waiting to be freed,
Asleep and patient for a hundred years?
Till of earth, rain and sun,
A miracle is done,
Some magic calls the sleeper and he hears,—

Arouses, puts forth blade
And leaf and bud, arrayed
Some morning in that garb of rosy snow,
The same fair matchless flower
As shed its petal-shower
Through old Iberian gardens long ago.

What is it that endures,
Survives, persists, immures
Life's very self, preserving type and plan?—
Yet learns the scope of change,
As the long cycles range,—
Looks through the eyes of bluebird, wolf, and man?

What lurks in the deep gaze
Of the old wolf? Amaze,
Hope, recognition, gladness, anger, fear.
But deeper than all these
Love muses, yearns and sees,
And is the self that does not change nor veer.

Not love of self alone,
Struggle for lair and bone,
But self-denying love of mate and young,
Love that is kind and wise,
Knows trust and sacrifice,
And speaks the o' dark universal tongue.

In Nature you behold
But strivings manifold,
Battle and conflict, tribe warring against tribe?
Look deeper, and see all
That death cannot appal,
Failure intimidate, nor fortune bribe.

Our brothers of the air
Who come with June must dare,
Be bold and strong, have knowledge, lust, and choice;
Yet think, when glad hosts throng
The summer woods with song,
Love gave them beauty and love lends them voice.

Love surely in some form
Bade them brave night and storm,—
Was the dark binnacle that held them true,
Those tiny mariners
No unknown voyage deters,
When the old migrant longing stirs anew.

And who has understood
Our brothers of the wood,
Save he who put off guile and every guise
Of violence,—made truce
With panther, bear and moose,
As beings like ourselves whom love makes wise?

For they too do love's will,
Our lesser clansmen still;
The House of Many Mansions holds us all;
Courageous, glad and hale,
They go forth on the trail,
Hearing the message, hearkening to the call.

Oh, not fortuitous chance
Alone, nor circumstance,
Begot the creatures after their own kind;
But always loving will
Was present to fulfil
The primal purpose groping up to mind.

Adversity but bade
New puissance spring to aid,
New powers develop, new aptness come in play,
Yet never function wrought
Capacity from nought,—
Gave skill and mastery to the shapes of clay;

For always while new need
Evoked new thought through deed,
Old self was there to ponder, choose, and strive.
Fortune might mould, evolve,
But impulse must resolve,
Equipped at length to know, rejoice, and thrive.

And evermore must Love
Hearten, foresee, approve,
And look upon the work and find it good;
Else would all effort fail,—
The very stars avail
Less than a swarm of fireflies in a wood.

Take love out of the world
One day, and we are hurled
Back into night to perish in the void.
Love is the very girth
And cincture of this earth,
No stitch to be unloosed, no link destroyed.

ay,
However wild and long
The battle of the strong,
Stronger and longer are the hours of peace,
When gladness has its way
Under the fair blue day,
And life aspires, takes thought, bids good increase.

re.
e.
So dawns the awaited hour
When the great cosmic power
Of love was first declared by Christ; so too
To-day we keep in mind
His name who taught mankind
That open secret old, yet ever new,—

Commemorate his birth
Who loved the kindly earth,
Was gentle, strong, compassionate, humane,
And tolerant and wise
And glad,—the very guise
And height of manhood not to lose again.

Shall we not then forego
Lavish perfunctory show,
The burdensome display, the empty gift,
That we may have to give
To every soul alive
Of love's illumination, cheer, and lift?

See rich and poor be fed !
Break up thy soul for bread,
Be loaves and fishes to the hungry heart,
That a great multitude,
Receiving of thy good,
May bless the God within thee and depart !

You workmen, love your work
Or leave it. Let no irk
Unsteady the labourious hand, that still
Must give the spirit play
To follow her own way
To beauty, through devotion, care, and skill.

How otherwise find vent
For soul's imperious bent,
Than thro' these hands for wonder-working made,
When Love the sure and bold
Guides to the unfortold ?
Blessed the craftsman who is unafraid !

Give Beauty her sweet will,
Make love your mistress still,
You lovers, nor delay ! God's time be yours.
Make low-born jealousy
And doubt ashamed to be,
And cast old envious gossip out of doors.

Believe the truth of love,
Enact the beauty of love,
Praise and adore the goodliness of love.
For we are wise by love,
And strong and fair through love,
No less than sainted and inspired with love.

Remember the new word
The Syrian twilight heard,
That marvellous discourse which John records,
The one last great command
The Master left his band,
"Love one another !" And our time affords

What greater scope than just
To execute that trust ?
Love greatly ; love ; love is life's best employ.
Neighbour, sweetheart, or friend,
Love wholly, to love's end ;
So is the round world richer for your joy.

Love only, one or all !
Measure no great and small !
Love is a seed, life-bearing, undecayed ;
And that immortal germ
Past bounds of zone and term
Will grow and cover the whole world with shade.

Sow love, it cannot fail ;
Adversity's sharp hail
May cut all else to ground ; fair love survives.
The black frost of despair
And slander's bitter air,—
Love will outlast them by a thousand lives.

Be body, mind and soul,
Subject to love's control,
Each loving to the limit of love's power ;
And all as one, not three,
So is man's trinity
Enhanced and freed and gladdened hour by hour.

Beauty from youth to age,
The body's heritage,
Love will not forfeit by neglect nor shame ;
And knowledge, dearly bought,
Love will account as nought,
Unless it serve soul's need and body's claim.

Let soul desire, mind ask,
And body crave ; our task
Be to fulfil each want in love's own way.
So shall the good and true
Partake of beauty too,
And life be helped and greatened day by day.

Spend love, and save it not ;
In act, in wish, in thought,
Spend love upon this lifetime without stint.
Let not the heart grow dry,
As the good hours go by ;
Love now, see earth take on the glory tint.

Open the door to-night
Within your heart, and light
The lantern of love there to shine afar.
On a tumultuous sea
Some straining craft, maybe,
With bearings lost, shall sight love's silver star.

